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Research Article

## Transformational Leadership and Performance of University Leaders in Aceh: Gender Perspective

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**Abstract:** Women's leadership in Aceh has become a very interesting topic. Due to the strong implementation of Islamic law, the existence of women leaders is still a debate in Aceh, including women's leadership in the education sector. At the level of higher education, currently there is only one woman who occupies a position as leader. Leadership is one most important role in achieving goal, mission and design in organization. The purpose of the study is to examine the important criteria for measuring performance appraisal of university leaders in Aceh. The relationship between transformational leadership and performance are investigated for this purpose. This study was discuss how communication style and cultural affect transformational leadership and its impact on performance of women leaders at universities in Aceh. A sample was drawn from lecturers and colleges at Ubudiyah University with 137 respondents. Data that used in this study is primary data in form of questioner with Likert scale. SPSS was used to analyze demographic characteristics of the respondents and descriptive analysis. AMOS 22 was adopted for the Structural Equation Modelling of the survey model for verifikatif analysis using regression weight/loading factor. The findings of this study have shown significant relationships among the variables under investigation. Transformational leadership was found as moderate variable between communication style, culture and performance. The results of this study could provide input to the Government of Aceh to improve the performance of women leaders especially the education sector.

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**Key Words:** transformational leadership, performance, gender perspective, communication style, culture, Aceh.

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### 1. Introduction

Aceh is one of provinces in Indonesia. It is located at the northern tip of Sumatera Island. This province has strong culture and customs. It is said as "Port of Mecca", which is very strong in applying Islamic Sharia, including leader election. Regarding leader criteria, government of Aceh publishes Fatwa of People Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Umat/MPU*) of Aceh No. 2/2014 on Criteria of Leaders According to Islamic Sharia. Women in Aceh have got their own places and it is set specifically in their customs. Women in the context of gender are defined as an attached nature to someone to be feminine. It is not explained in Fatwa of People Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Umat/MPU*) of Aceh No. 2/2014 whether the criteria of leaders in Aceh also consider sex. However, because of strong Islamic Sharia implementation, the existence of female leaders still becomes a debatable topic in Aceh.

Based on the prior study conducted by the researchers, the phenomenon of female leaders in the education sector was due to Aceh Education Board's trust towards their work performance. Women are considered to have good work performance, so they can be leader at universities. This work performance evaluation gives an opportunity to the women so they will be able to be leaders at universities and develop their leadership skill.

The underlying phenomenon to the study is the stigma built by community that women leader at universities are less competent regarding their communication style, culture, transformational leadership and her performance. Thus, there should be efforts to improve women leader's performance through transformational leadership, communication style and culture.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Transformational Leadership

Simola et al. (2012) define transformational leadership as a type of leadership in which interactions among interested parties are organized "around a collective purpose" in such a way that "transform, motivate, and enhance the actions and ethical aspirations of followers." Transformational leadership is a leadership style that seeks positive transformations "in those who follow" and that achieves desired changes through the "strategy and structure" of the organization Geib and Swenson, 2013). According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership is characterized by several patterns of behavior. First, transformational leadership employs the charisma of leaders in order to gain the respect and trust of stakeholders and to instill pride in the latter. In addition, charisma underlines the provision of a common vision and sense of mission necessary for the transformation. The second

characteristic is Inspiration through which leaders employ symbols to redirect followers' efforts; they express in a simplistic manner the fundamental purpose of the transformation process, and clearly communicate the accompanying higher expectations. The third characteristic is intellectual stimulation. Leaders intellectually stimulate employees by emphasizing rationality and creativity in problem-solving situations. Finally, transformational leadership offers individualized consideration: leaders treat employees individually offering them personal attention and, whenever necessary, they provide coaching and advise to those employees.

The transformational leadership enhances the members' awareness in the importance and the values of a specific ideal goal. It makes the members to desire beyond their own interest, and to be focused on the higher level of aspiration for the organization, which leads to the enhancement of their performances (Bass, 1985). The paradigm of transformational leadership is in line with the suggestion by Schein (2010) that the important role of a leader is creating culture and managing, and also the suggestion by Kotter (2008) that it is creating adaptable and useful changes. The following is in their studies on leadership: theory of charismatic leadership (House, 1977), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978), and visionary leadership theory (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Their studies on leadership highlight the symbolic behaviors of leader, visionary and inspirational ability, nonverbal communication, appeals for idealistic value, and delegating authority to subordinates (House & Podsakoff, 1994). According to Bass (1985), a transformational leader should reasonably present the reward, clear goal, and directions. Transformational leadership lets an individual to transcend the personal interest; it encourages one to develop new, higher aspiration to elevate individual's goal, and it gives the ability to expand.

## 2.2 Performance

Organizations need highly performing individuals in order to meet their goals, to deliver the products and services they specialized in, and finally to achieve competitive advantage. Performance is also important for the individual. Accomplishing tasks and performing at a high level can be a source of satisfaction, with feelings of mastery and pride. Low performance and not achieving the goals might be experienced as dissatisfying or even as a personal failure. Moreover, performance—if it is recognized by others within the organization—is often rewarded by financial and other benefits. Performance is a major—although not the only—prerequisite for future career development and success in the labor market. Although there might be exceptions, high performers get promoted more easily within an organization and generally have better career opportunities than low performers (VanScotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000).

In a journal entitled "Organizational Performance Management and Measurement" written by Hanine Salem (2013), it is described that work performance is how employees do their job

and about the results achieved. Performance, in other words, can be defined as results of work, because it provides connection to strategic purposes of an organization.

According to Malthis and Jackson (2009), *performance* is whatever employees do and do not do. Performance is the result of work that can be achieved by someone of a group of people in an organization, based on their own authority and responsibility as an effort to achieve the purposes of organization concerned legally, without violating the law and in accordance with both moral and ethics.

## 2.3 Communication Style

Communication style is defined as a set of a specialized set of interpersonal behaviors that are used in a given situation. Communication style is a way of communicating and good language style. The style concerned can be in the form of verbal (in words) or nonverbal (vocalic, body language, the use of time, space and distance. Experience proves that communication style is really important and beneficial because it will smooth the process of communication and create a harmonious relationship.

## 2.4 Culture

Having established that organizational culture comprises a range of complex social phenomena, it is not surprising that scholars have identified corporate culture as a multi-layered construct which can be divided into layers according to these phenomena's observability and accessibility. Organizational culture has been defined as patterns of shared values and beliefs over time which produces behavioral norms that are adopted in solving problems (Owens 1987; Schein, 1990). The organization's internal environment is represented by its culture and is construed by the assumptions and beliefs of the managers and employees (Aycan et al., 1999).

Organizational Culture manifested in beliefs and assumptions, values, attitudes and behaviors of its members is a valuable source of firm's competitive advantage (Hall, 1993; Peteraf, 1993) since it shapes organizational procedures, unifies organizational capabilities into a cohesive whole, provides solutions to the problems faced by the organization, and, thereby, hindering or facilitating the organization's achievement of its goals (Yilmaz, 2008).

According to Kandula (2006) the key to good performance is a strong culture. He further main tains that due to difference in organizational culture, same strategies do not yield same results for two organizations in the same industry and in the same location. A positive and strong culture can make an average individual perform and achieve brilliantly whereas a negative and weak culture may demotivate an outstanding employee to underperform and end up with no achievement.

Therefore organizational culture has an active and direct role in performance management. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) believe that research on culture will contribute to the understanding of performance management. Magee (2002) contends that without considering the impact of organizational

culture, organizational practices such as performance management could be counterproductive because the two are interdependent and change in one will impact the other.

2.5 Hypothesis

Based in the literature review discussed previously, a hypothesis can be used in this study as the followings:

1. H1: Communication style, culture, transformational leadership and women leader' performance at universities in Aceh are good.
2. H2 : Communication style affects women leader' tranformational leadership at universities in Aceh
3. H3 : Culture affects women leader' tranformational leadership at universities in Aceh
4. H4 : Communication style affects women leader' performance at universities in Aceh
5. H5 : Culture affects women leader' performance at universities in Aceh
6. H6 : Tranformational leadership affects women leader' performance at universities in Aceh.
7. H7 : Communication style affects women leader' performance at universities in Aceh through transformational leadership.
8. H8 : Culture affects women leader' performance at universities in Aceh through transformational leadership.

1. Methodology

1.1. Design and Sample

Based on its purpose, this study belongs to descriptive study, by using quantitative approach methodology. Data source coverage that functions as subject of the study are samples and they are regarded representative ones. A sample was drawn from lecturers and colleges at Ubudiyah University with 137 respondents This research will present the women leaders' performance in education sector in Aceh.

1.2. Instrument

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze data. This model is derived from statistic software packet of AMOS 22.0 in the hypothesis model and analysis.

2. Findings and Discussion

Descriptive data is to display a general description of respondents' answers to the statements contained in the questionnaire. Description of the research data can be used to enrich the discussion, through the description of the data can be known how the responses of respondents to each variable being studied. Based on responses from 137 respondents about the research variables, the researchers will describe in detail the respondents' answers grouped in descriptive statistics. Empirical description of the data used in the study descriptively using the mean (mean). Through the mean number will be known to what degree of respondent perceptions of the variables that become indicators in this study. To make it easier to interpret the variables being studied, categorization of respondents score was done. Descriptive analysis is done referring to each indicator that is on the variables studied.

Descriptive analysis will be used to test the hypothesis by looking at the average value of the respondent's response to the statement, if the average value of respondents  $\geq 4$  then Ho

is not rejected, and if the average value of respondents  $< 4$  then Ho is rejected.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Analysis Result

Indicator	Average Answer
Communication Style	4,22
Culture	4,12
Transformational Leadership	4,35
Performance	4,63

Source: Primary Data, 2017 (processed)

It is seen in Table 4.1 that average value of respondents' answers towards variables being used in the study such as communication style, culture, tranformational leadership and performance shown are good. It is clearly shown as average value of respondents' answer is  $\geq 4$ .

Table 4.2 Result of Goodness of Fit Test

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Result	Model Evaluation
Chi-square	Expected small	336.872	Good Fit
Significance probability	$\geq 0.05$	0,061	Good Fit
CMINDF	$\leq 2.00$ atau $\leq 3.00$	2,372	Good Fit
GFI	$\geq 0.90 < 1$	0,966	Good Fit
AGFI	$\geq 0.90 < 1$	0,943	Good Fit
PGFI	$\geq 0.50 < 1$	0,503	Good Fit
NFI	$\geq 0.95 < 1$	0,917	Fit
RFI	$\geq 0.95 < 1$	0,973	Good Fit
IFI	Approaching 1.0	0,911	Fit
TLI	$\geq 0.95 < 1$	0,972	Good Fit
CFI	$\geq 0.95 < 1$	0,906	Fit
RMSEA	0.03 – 0.08	0,045	Good Fit

Basedon the result of goodness of fit test above Table 4.2 depicted that the model has fulfilled some indicators of goodness of fit so model modification do not need to be done.

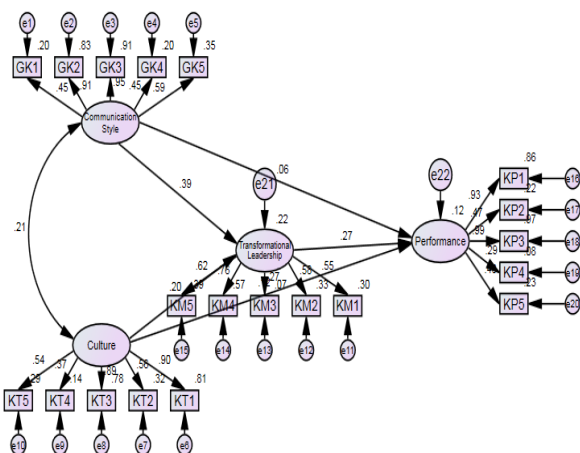
Table 4.3 Result of Model Estimation Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Transformational_Leadership <- Communication_Style	.766	.252	3.041	.002	par_2
Transformational_Leadership <- Culture	.124	.065	1.992	***	par_4
Performance <- Communication_Style	.180	.317	3.567	***	par_3
Performance <- Culture	.118	.096	3.228	***	par_5
Performance <- Transformational_Leadership	.440	.205	2.142	***	par_6
GK1 <- Communication_Style	1.000				
GK2 <- Communication_Style	2.614	.477	5.479	***	par_7
GK3 <- Communication_Style	2.767	.493	5.618	***	par_8
GK4 <- Communication_Style	1.247	.310	4.025	***	par_9
GK5 <- Communication_Style	1.538	.330	4.659	***	par_10
KT1 <- Culture	1.000				
KT2 <- Culture	.522	.077	6.769	***	par_11
KT3 <- Culture	.989	.081	12.204	***	par_12
KT4 <- Culture	.322	.078	4.108	***	par_13
KT5 <- Culture	.419	.063	6.652	***	par_14
KM1 <- Transformational_Leadership	1.000				
KM2 <- Transformational_Leadership	1.138	.247	4.605	***	par_15
KM3 <- Transformational_Leadership	.502	.194	2.588	.010	par_16
KM4 <- Transformational_Leadership	1.169	.228	5.126	***	par_17
KM5 <- Transformational_Leadership	.959	.187	5.123	***	par_18
KP1 <- Performance	1.000				
KP2 <- Performance	.430	.072	5.940	***	par_19
KP3 <- Performance	1.064	.055	19.382	***	par_20
KP4 <- Performance	.247	.071	3.463	***	par_21
KP5 <- Performance	.376	.061	6.134	***	par_22

Based on the estimated result in prior, some conclusions can be drawn as the followings:

1. Communication style affected significantly towards women leader transformational leadership at universities in Aceh. It is because probability value is less than 0,05 ( $.002 < 0,05$ ) and CR values is 3.041 ( $CR > 1,96$ ). The value if positive estimation is 0,766 which means the effect is positive, or in other words if communication style is improved, transformational leadership will also be improved.
2. Culture affected significantly towards women leader transformational leadership at universities in Aceh. It is shown with the value of probability that reaches less than 0,05 ( $*** < 0,05$ ) and the value of CR as many as 1.992 ( $CR > 1,96$ ). The positive estimation value reaches 0,124, which means the influence is positive. In other words, if culture improves, transformational leadership will also improve.
3. Communication style affected women leader performance at universities in Aceh significantly. Thus was presented by the probability value that reaches less than 0,05 ( $*** < 0,05$ ) and the value of CR as much as 3.567 ( $CR > 1,96$ ). The value if positive estimation is 0,180 in which the influence is positive. This also means that if communication style improves, performance will also improve.
4. Culture affected women leader performance at universities in Aceh significantly. This is because the probability value is less than 0,05 ( $*** < 0,05$ ) and the CR value is as much as 3.228 ( $CR > 1,96$ ). The value of positive estimation is 0,118 in which the influence is positive. In other words, if culture improves, the performance will improve as well.
5. Transformational leadership affected significantly to women leader performance at universities in Aceh. It was shown with less than 0,05 ( $*** < 0,05$ ) and CR value for 2.142 ( $CR > 1,96$ ). The value of positive estimation is 0,440, which means there is a positive influence. In other words, if transformational leadership improves, performance will improve.

Based on the coefficient result of regression conducted, it can be concluded that there were direct influences from various variables being studied. It can be clearly seen in the following picture (Picture 4.1).



We can see the adjusted R-square to know the contribution of exogenous variable towards endogenous variables. Determination coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) basically measures how far the model can explain endogenous variables.

It is distinguished that transformational leadership variables are affected by variables of communication style and culture. The value of R-square of transformational leadership variable is 0,615, which means that variables of communication style, and culture contributed as much as 61,5 % towards transformational leadership, while the rest is influenced by other factors than those variables.

The variable of women leader performance is affected by the variable of transformational leadership, communication style and culture. The value of R-square of women leader performance variable is 0,889, which means variables of transformational leadership, communication style and culture contributed as much as 88,9% to performance, while the rest is influenced by other factors than those variables.

To know whether indirect influence of X1 towards Z through Y and X2 towards Z through Y, is significant or not, Sobel test is conducted. Sobel test was used to know indirect influence of mediation variables. To get the value of Sobel, Calculator Sobel test application was used.

**Table 4.4 Result of Sobel Test**

Influence	Result of Sobel Test	Notes
X1 towards Z through Y	0,011	significant
X2 towards Z through Y	0,018	significant

Based on the table above, there are some conclusions described as the followings:

- a. Indirect influence of communication style towards women leader' performance through transformational leadership was significant because the significance value is  $0,021 < 0,05$ . Hence, the variable of transformational leadership mediated the influence of communication style towards performance.
- b. Indirect influence of culture towards women leader' performance through transformational leadership was significant because the significance value is  $0,028 < 0,05$ . Thus, the variable of transformational leadership mediated the influence of culture towards performance.

### 1. Conclusion

According to the result of data analysis on the fourth chapter, some conclusions can be drawn as the followings:

1. Communication style, culture, transformational leadership and performance by women leader at universities in Aceh are good.
2. Communication style influenced significantly towards women leader' transformational leadership at universities in Aceh. The value of the influence was positive, in which transformational leadership will improve if communication style improves.
3. Culture influenced significantly towards women leader' transformational leadership at universities in Aceh. The value of the influence was positive, in which transformational leadership will improve if culture improves.
4. Communication style influenced significantly towards women leader' performance at universities in Aceh. The value of influence was positive, which means performance will improve if communication style improves.
5. Culture influenced significantly towards women leader'

performance at universities in Aceh. The value of influence was positive, which means performance will improve if culture improves.

6. Transformational leadership significantly towards women leader' performance at universities in Aceh. The value of influence was positive, which means performance will improve if transformational leadership improves.
7. Communication style influenced significantly towards women leader' performance at universities in Aceh through transformational leadership. Hence, the variable of transformational leadership mediated the influence of communication style towards performance.
8. Culture influenced significantly towards women leader' performance at universities in Aceh through transformational leadership. Hence, the variable of transformational leadership mediated the influence of culture towards performance.

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